



## Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of November 1, 2021

*Report covers from October 16, 2021 to October 29, 2021*

*Items requiring Board vote or discussion are noted with an asterisk (\*)*

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### A. Town Department Reports/Requests

#### (1) Strategic Planning Committee Meeting Summary (\*)

I attended the subject meeting along with Chairman Preen (who is a member of the Committee) on October 25, 2021. The Committee reviewed the working draft of the revision to the Essex Strategic Plan and made individual assignments for members and staff to produce missing content and to provide that to the Town Planner by November 17, 2021. The Committee will meet again on December 2, 2021 to review a more complete version of the working draft and to begin editing the draft for consistent format and content breakdown.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion as necessary.**

#### (2) Essex Housing Coalition Meeting Summary (\*)

I participated in a remote meeting of the Essex Housing Coalition along with Chairman Preen on October 27, 2021. The Coalition is coordinated by the Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA) and is helping to formulate a plan to bring additional affordable housing to Essex. The meeting featured a discussion about continuing to plan to bring a proposal to the Annual Town Meeting in May to form an Affordable Housing Trust. The Trust would be established by a new bylaw and its members would utilize funds deposited into the trust account to further affordable housing goals.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion as necessary.**

### B. Computer Systems

#### (1) Regional IT Collaborative Meeting Summary

I participated in the subject meeting on October 28, 2021. The meeting featured a discussion about the ongoing effort to get all six communities connected by municipal fiber to Danvers (like Essex already is). The group is also moving forward with a plan to implement a regional "security fabric" solution, and the Fall Town Meeting will consider the Town's portion of that work. It is also possible that the initial setup of the security fabric will be funded via a State grant, in which case any Town funding that is approved will be returned to the Town Technology Fund.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### C. Personnel

No items.

### D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

#### (1) Old Fire/Police Station Demolition Project Update (\*)

Chairman Pereen and I participated in remote project meetings with respect to the demolition of the old fire and police station at 24 Martin Street on October 19 and 26, 2021. Demolition is complete but site restoration has been delayed. The demolition subcontractor encountered a substantial amount of water in the work zone during the week of October 18, 2021. Water also backed up in a pipe that usually drained the area behind the backstop at the Annie Gosbee Field and flooded new landscaping that a private group had just completed in that area. Further, during the demolition, small quantities of additional asbestos containing materials (ACM) that had not been documented on the original building survey were encountered.

With respect to the water issue, our designer got involved with investigating the matter, and it was necessary for the designer to direct our contractor to hire a company capable of using line tracing equipment to trace individual drain lines from manholes. This work was done on October 28, 2021 and was of limited value, due to camera images being obscured by silty water. We will likely know more about next steps by meeting time.

With respect to the additional ACM, our general contractor will pack up the items in question and will ship them to an approved disposal facility (possibly incurring charges worthy of a project change order, due to unforeseen site conditions).

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion as necessary.**

#### (2) Styling of Prefabricated Shed to House Antique Hand Fire Pumper (\*)

Now that the restoration of the old fire and police station site at 24 Martin Street is underway, it is time to turn attention to the prefabricated shed that needs to be ordered to house the Town's antique hand fire pumper for display. Building fabricators are typically able to offer a variety of styles and exterior finishes.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion as necessary.**

#### (3) Conomo Point Seawall Replacement Project Kickoff Meeting (\*)

Selectman Phippen and I met with our engineering contractor, the Conservation Agent, and personnel from the construction contractor who will be replacing the Conomo Point Seawall (ACK Marine & General Contracting, LLC) on October 28, 2021, out at the site. The site visit allowed the Conservation Agent to review the requirements of the Order of Conditions for the project and for our engineer and I to go over important project elements with the contractor. The project will

most likely commence in mid-November and work will progress continuously through May of 2022. It was agreed that I would reach out to National Grid with respect to an extremely old utility pole in the work zone that the utility should consider upgrading on its own during the project.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion as necessary.**

#### **E. Insurance**

No items.

#### **F. Facilities**

##### (1) Senior Center Furnace Repair

The gas furnace at the Senior Center was not producing heat as of October 28, 2021 after power was restored following a recent, prolonged power outage. After having the system inspected by a contractor, we learned that the return of power could have damaged a motor necessary to move an adequate volume of air through the system. After having that motor replaced, the system was still not operable. As such, it will be necessary for the Fall Town Meeting to consider funding the replacement of the system.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

#### **G. Fiscal/Budget**

##### (1) School Budget Collaboration Group Meeting Summary

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Selectman Bradford, Finance Committee Chairman Buttrick, and I participated in the subject meeting on October 29, 2021. The meeting featured a discussion regarding how the District will strive to keep the overall operating budget apportionment increase down as much as possible. The question of how to best manage years when Essex is on the high side of the overall apportionment was also discussed. Explaining what the District is already doing to keep the overall increase down and illustrating how each Town has fared over time with respect to that overall increase may be helpful (the formula in the regional agreement will always put one town's apportionment above the overall increase and one town's apportionment below it).

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion as necessary.**

#### **H. Complaints**

No items.

## **I. Meetings Attended**

### (1) Massachusetts Health Officers' Annual Meeting & Trade Show

I attended the subject meeting on October 20 and 21, 2021 on Cape Cod. Attendance allows me to obtain all necessary continuing education credits for my Registered Sanitarian, Approved Soil Evaluator, and Approved Septic System Inspector certifications. The meeting offers excellent updates concerning the status of on-site wastewater technology and regulation and other useful topics such as emergency preparedness and climate change. The Commissioners from the Department of Public Health and the Department of Environmental Protection also spoke and provided updates with respect to a number of issues.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## **J. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations**

### (1) Draft Fall Town Meeting Motions

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I have developed draft motions for the Fall Town Meeting, for the Board's review.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion as necessary.**

### (2) Preparation for Town Zoning Bylaw Study

The recent storm postponed the Town zoning study kickoff meeting/Town tour with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) from October 26, 2021 until November 2, 2021. In the interim, I am working to provide MAPC with Assessors' and GIS data that MAPC will use to begin evaluating the Town's overall existing makeup.

*Recommendation:* I will update the Board as necessary.

## **K. Legal Issues**

No items.

## **L. Grants**

### (1) MIIA Loss Control Grant

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The Essex Safety Committee agreed at a recent meeting that the fire and police departments should attempt to obtain a search drone with thermal camera capabilities to assist the departments when searching for a party lost in the woods. Calls of this nature occur on a regular basis and use of a drone would help to pinpoint the party's location rapidly, allowing personnel to plan the safest route to them. Our insurance company, MIIA, offers an annual loss control grant and we have learned that the company will likely support Essex's proposal as a pilot

program. The drone's cost is approximately \$8,000 and at least one of our police officers and at least one of our firefighters would obtain the necessary FAA operator's license. The Chairman has signed the on-line grant application.

**Recommendation: Board vote to ratify the Chairman's signature of the application.**

(2) Further Review of Federal Funding Prospects for Apple Street Elevation (\*)

On October 19, 2021, I met virtually with personnel from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and their consultant. The purpose of the meeting was to get an update on where the consultant stands with the analysis of a predictive sea level rise data set known as the Woods Hole Coastal Data Set.

As the Board may recall, in reviewing the competitiveness of our Apple Street roadbed elevation project against the grant criteria within the Building Resilient Communities and Infrastructure (BRIC) program (a Federal Emergency Management Agency – FEMA grant program), we have been monitoring FEMA's receptiveness to future events over time. During the first BRIC funding cycle, FEMA's rules did not accommodate the use of future flooding predictions very well. Instead, the rules were still focused on how often a particular event has happened in the past. With respect to the Apple Street flooding, while it has happened occasionally in the past, it is the prediction for future frequency that we are really concerned about.

Fortunately, MEMA is learning that FEMA is beginning to move toward the acceptance of using future data on the same footing as past occurrence data. To that end, MEMA and its consultant expect to have full access to the Woods Hole data soon and will use it to help the Town develop the critical Benefit Cost Analysis (BCA) score, which only allows a project to be applied for if above a certain threshold.

On October 27, 2021, I was able to speak directly to FEMA personnel via a virtual meeting that Congressman Moulton's office set up, along with personnel from MEMA and its technical consultant. During that meeting, we posed some very specific questions to FEMA that related directly to our chances of meeting the BCA threshold and found that our project may be capable of doing so. Presently, MEMA and its contractor are reviewing our project more closely, based upon FEMA's feedback, and we should know more about our chances soon.

**Recommendation: Board discussion as necessary.**

(3) Old Essex Road Stream Crossing Grant Site Visit (\*)

Selectman Phippen and I participated in a site visit at the Ipswich town line with personnel from the Town of Ipswich and from the Ipswich River Watershed Association (IRWA). As the Board may recall, IRWA applied for grant funding

to eliminate a culvert going under Old Essex Road to allow the stream that serves at the Town line to flow freely. That application was not funded but IRWA would like to explore additional grant funding opportunities in the future. A successful grant application would dead-end the road on either side of the stream, something the Town of Ipswich would like to do anyway. The question of whether MA DOT first addresses a flow restriction under nearby Route 133 should be handled first, since eliminating the restriction at Old Essex Road, only to encounter a restriction at Route 133 is not an effective way to restore the larger marsh area.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion as necessary.**

#### **M. Emergency Planning**

No items.

#### **N. Other Items**

No items.

*This report is available at **[www.essexma.org](http://www.essexma.org)** on the morning after any regularly scheduled Essex Board of Selectmen's Meeting.*